

WSDOT
Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2004

Attendees:

Dan O'Neal (WSDOT, FMSIB)	Senator Dan Swecker
Representative Doug Ericksen	Charlie Howard (WSDOT)
Arno Hart (Wilbur Smith Assoc)	Tom Jones (Wilbur Smith Assoc)
Barbara Ivanov (WSDOT)	Joy Dopita (WSDOT)
Elizabeth Stratton (WSDOT)	Linda Mullen (WSDOT)
Dale Hammond (Desautel Hege Communications)	Sophie Hartshorn (Wilbur Smith Assoc)
Sheri Sawyer (Assoc of WA Cities)	Jeff Margolis (Mt. Baker Foothills Assoc)
Jacki Rossing (canthecorridor.org)	Ed Kramer

Chair Dan O'Neal opened the meeting at 8:35am at the WSDOT Tacoma Maintenance Facility.

STUDY FINDINGS:

Arno Hart presented Technical Memorandums 3-6, and the Executive Summary of the full report.

Discussion points:

I. Energy

Senator Swecker asked if the energy sector has an interest in a corridor in Eastern Washington. Arno Hart said there is some potential. Tom Jones said the Pacific Northwest is a smaller energy market, relative to those in the Midwest, East Coast, and Southwestern US.

Representative Ericksen asked where BP's interest is in future lines. Tom Jones said east to west within Washington State. Also note that there is tremendous private sector resistance to sharing utility corridors.

Senator Swecker said that when the final report is presented to the legislature, we need to share the report with all affected committees. He then asked what percentage of total construction costs would come from adding right-of-way for the energy corridor. Arno Hart responded that under current regulations, we couldn't build pipelines under highways.

Dan O'Neal asked if the entity referenced in recommendation #5 would be a stand alone or combined with an existing agency. Arno said it would need to be separate. Senator Swecker said that another approach could be to modify the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) and add this charge to their responsibilities.

II. Transportation

Senator Swecker asked if there is emerging interest in a rail/energy corridor over Stampede Pass.

Tom Jones said that Kittitas County has a ballot issue this fall to create passenger rail services. Barbara Ivanov said that after crown cutting the tunnel, topography constraints on either side of the tunnel will make adding significant capacity difficult.

Senator Swecker said that a partially public-funded project could allow a reasonable truck-tolling rate.

Representative Ericksen asked if there are examples of mandatory truck diversions in the United States. Arno Hart referred to the Alameda Corridor. He said a 100 percent diversion rate wouldn't happen without legal requirements. Dan O'Neal asked if there are any other examples of such corridors. Arno Hart said that there are no user-based, 100% private sector financed corridors in the United States.

Charlie Howard said that this report points us to the need for further study of a north-south corridor from Central Puget Sound to the Oregon border.

III. Environmental and Legal Issues

Senator Swecker asked if one could have a design-build process with a single master permitting process. Arno said not with a project of this complexity.

Representative Ericksen said that one of the objectives in this study was to learn if there are benefits to co-locating different types of energy and transportation projects. It appears there may be benefits to separate them.

IV. Recommendations

After reviewing the findings in the executive summary, Senator Swecker asked the consultant team if they had developed a sequenced order for the recommendations. He also asked if they had done a cost comparison between adding capacity to I-5 and building a new truck-only corridor. These issues were not covered in the study.

PUBLIC FORUMS:

Dale Hammond from Desautel Hege Communications presented a draft agenda and strategy for upcoming forums.

Senator Swecker asked to change the November 18 public forum date to either November 23 or December 1. He also recommended that the technical memorandums and executive summary be shared with the public, now, as draft documents.

Dan O'Neal said that FMSIB would be a good resource for further work.

Senator Swecker volunteered to moderate the Chehalis forum, and stay late if there was a need to accommodate public comment. Barbara Ivanov will ask Representative Ericksen if he'd like to moderate the Bellingham session.

Adjourned at 10:55am